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Referendum and the Working Class

The working class has no interest in the EU referendum result. However we do have an interest in its consequences particularly the need for class solidarity in respect to the danger of divisiveness, nationalism, racism and xenophobia.

The nature of a referendum is essentially divisive - an either A or B vote, and this last one has been arousing a lot of nastiness and intolerance. Neither option offered could ever solve workers' problems. Yet after the vote for "*Brexit*" on the radio there were delighted workers telling the interviewer that they "*had their country back*". Utter nonsense - the means of production and distribution are still owned by the capitalist class to the exclusion of the rest of society. It is capitalism which causes the problems that workers face on a daily basis and it is only the conscious, democratic and political action of a socialist majority that can end these problems once and for all through the establishment of socialism. It is only in socialism that "*...the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex*" (OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLESobject and Declaration of Principles, Socialist Party of Great Britain).

Socialists also have no interest in the problems of a Labour Party whose MPs seem to have realised that its support base is shrinking fast and believe this can only be made right by replacing one leader with another. It can't. The history of the Labour Party is a history of failure, as it is for any capitalist party. Nationalisation programmes, regulating the economy and Keynesianism have all been tried and failed. As too, the free trade, free market globalisation policy of the Blairites which came crashing down around their heads in 2008. Shed no tears for the possible demise of the Labour Party. It has always been and still is a serious barrier to the establishment of socialism.

The '*Labour*' Party has conned the workers for generations with vote-catching programmes of '*reforms*', which are at best mere palliatives. These palliatives are designed to cause minimum difficulty for the capitalist class and are not able to solve the real problems of the working class. Social reforms enacted one minute are repealed the next. Worse, while the Labour Party denies the class struggle arising out of the wages system and the exploitation of the working class that does not prevent it claiming fraudulently to be a "*socialist party*".

We have been told that the working class in Britain are not racists and that only a minority hold racist views. However, workers face innumerable social problems: poor housing, lack of resources, low pay, "*zero hour contracts*", overcrowded schools, long queues to see the doctors, crumbling health care and no decent future for the children. Yet some workers mistakenly believe these social problems are a result of immigration. It is wrong. And it

is historically wrong. Capitalism causes the social problems the working class face in respect to their lives not the other workers from abroad who are working here. Workers, under capitalism are a subject and exploited class and will remain so until they establish socialism.

During the lead-up to the EU referendum there was clearly a sizeable anti-immigrant vote among the non-socialist working class who have deserted the Labour Party. And it has to be recognised not ignored because it has a history. Remember how Enoch Powell with his "*rivers of blood*" rhetoric got support from London Dockers - all of them Labour supporters?! And back in the Thirties, Mosley's Black Shirts were recruited from the Labour areas; just as today the Britain First's '*northern brigades*' with their thuggish visits to over 60 northern mosques likewise would be mostly from Labour areas. Shortly after the result, anti-Polish slogans were daubed on walls and racial abuse was thrown at workers from abroad. This is a shameful display by some workers of class disunity and political ignorance. As Shylock remarked:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? ... If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?(MERCHANT OF VENICE– Shylock, Act III, Scene 1)

The racist Right has always used the "*chip on the shoulder*" propaganda and is one of the reasons why Hitler and Mussolini got mass support from the working class in the 1930s. Europe is now full of petty little corporals whipping-up hatred against "*the other*". More worrying still is the fashion to describe those who did not vote for Brexit as "*traitors*" – socialists did not vote for or against the EU. The working class had no interest in the referendum. It was about the interest of employers not workers. In the past State violence was inflicted on "*traitors*". Traitors were publically hung drawn and quartered. It is a medieval term used by a medieval mind.

For the next two to three months, post-Brexit, workers are going to have to endure party political leadership contests. Workers should not let themselves be side-tracked into yet more leadership trivia and time-wasting. Workers don't need 'leaders' to organise themselves effectively and democratically: what is needed is class-consciousness, and a clear sense of who we are and where we want to be, and how to get there. It is clear that we are part of a world-wide working class with a powerful potential for establishing a world-wide social framework based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. And how to get there rests with no one else but the world's working class.

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The Failure of Social Democracy

Marx and Economic Crises

Marx showed that the periodic failure of capitalists to find buyers for their commodities in one or more sectors of the economy leads on to an economic crisis. However, the crisis and subsequent trade depression is not due to any overall shortage of purchasing power but to the failure of capitalists to exercise their power to purchase commodities at a crucial time.

Marx explained economic crises in his answer to the economist J. B. Say.

J. B. Say argued that a serious depression should not take place because "*every seller brings a buyer to the market*": by which he meant that every producer of commodities who sells his products then has the cash with which he can at once buy other products and so keep industry busy.

Marx dealt with it in CAPITAL VOL. 1, Chapter III, section 2. He accepted Say's argument with, however, one qualification. He agreed that the sellers have the cash with which they can go at once out and buy some other commodity, but he pointed out that "*no one is forthwith to purchase because he has just sold*".

He may choose not to do so and if the interval of time between the sale and the purchase is too great, the result is “*a crisis*”.

The question to be answered then is why this failure to buy commodities takes place.

Say has disregarded the fact that part of capitalist expenditure which is investment (as distinct from the capitalists' purchase of necessities and luxuries for personal consumption) has as its sole purpose making a profit, and if there is no prospect that a profit can be made the capitalist refrains from buying although he has the means to buy.

Using their surplus cash to provide jobs for the unemployed is not what the capitalists are in business to do. When the economic conditions improve and there is a prospect of making a profit, companies are only too willing to invest.

In CAPITAL VOLUME III, Ch. XV Marx summarized the necessity of periodic crises which take place in an anarchic system of commodity production and exchange for profit:

From time to time the conflict of antagonistic agencies finds vent in crises. The crises are always but momentary and forcible solutions of the existing contradictions [of capitalism]. They are violent eruptions which for a time restore the disturbed equilibrium (p. 249)

These remarks on crises by Marx are important because they show, *contra* to his critics, that Marx did not hold a collapse theory of capitalism. Nowhere did he ever write that capitalism would collapse under the weight of its own contradictions. He also said in THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE (Volume 2, Part 2, p. 269), that there were no permanent crises.

And it is important to note that Marx, by the time he came to write CAPITAL, certainly had fundamentally broken with the notion of a final crisis of capitalism. When Nikolai Danielson, his Russian translator, asked in 1879 when he could finally expect the sequel to the first volume of CAPITAL, Marx answered that he had to wait for the end of the then - present crisis. Marx stated that the crisis and subsequent long depression showed a series of distinctive features which he wanted to examine and to incorporate into his work.

And Marx remarked in conclusion:

However the course of this crisis might develop itself — although most important to observe in its details for the student of capitalist production and the professional théoricien — it will pass over, like its predecessors, and initiate a new ‘industrial cycle’ with all of its diversified phases of prosperity, etc. (MARX-ENGELS COLLECTED WORKS VOLUME 45, p.355)

In Marx's mature writings there was no theory of permanent crisis. He did not believe that crises would get worse and worse any more than he believed capitalism would collapse.

Engels and Economic Crises

If Marx thought that there were no permanent crises and capitalism would not collapse, this was not the case with Engels.

In 1885 Engels, while accepting a “*chronic depression*” existed believed that there would still be a violent and general crash with unknown consequences.

In a letter to Danielson he wrote:

By thus delaying the thunderstorm which formerly cleared the atmosphere every ten years this continued chronic depression must prepare a crash of a violence and extent such as we have never known before” (Marx and Engels Correspondence 13. 11. 1885).

And, according to Kautsky, Engels believed capitalism would suffer a “*breakdown*” (*Zusammenbruch*), an idea which Bernstein was to later seize upon and erroneously lay at the door of Marx in Bernstein’s revision of what he understood as so-called “*Marxism*” (see F. Engels Correspondence with K. Kautsky pp 174-5).

Of course, these remarks by Engels were all contained in private correspondence rather than being published as considered theoretical propositions.

Nevertheless, Engels’s made a comment in the *Preface* to the English edition of CAPITAL VOLUME 1 (November 15th 1886) which gave the impression that he believed that stagnation would continue indefinitely.

He wrote:

...the decennial cycle of stagnation, prosperity, overproduction and crisis, ever recurrent from 1825 to 1867, seems indeed to have run its course; but only to land us in the slough of despond of a permanent and chronic depression (CAPITAL VOLUME 1, p 112-3 penguin ed).

Engels went on to state:

...and we can almost calculate the moment when the unemployed, losing patience, will take their own fate into their own hands... (p. 113)

Engels’s mistaken comments on economic crises and the unemployed were to influence the views of both the Social Democratic Federation and The Socialist League:

Here, for example, is William Morris, then a speaker for The Socialist League :in a lecture on The Depression of Trade in 1885:

For do not deceive yourselves: the Depression in Trade in this country is not accidental or transitory, nor is its cause hard to find: the overweening hopes of our capitalists 30 years ago were founded on the assumption that England was to be for ever the one serious manufacturing country in the world, supplying all other countries with manufactured goods and receiving from them raw materials for the non-human machines and food for the human ones to be constantly worked up into fresh goods: the market was to be unlimited, the expansion of production unchecked; changes had happened in the constitution of society before but could never happen again: the heaven of the well-to-do middle class was realized here in England...

And Morris concluded:

I cannot express better the desperate condition of those who see nothing before us but ever fresh development of our capitalist system than by quoting the words of the great Socialist economist F[rederick] Engels from the March [1885] number of the Commonweal: "Here is the vulnerable place, the heel of Achilles for capitalist production: its very basis is the necessity for constant expansion, and this constant expansion is now become impossible. It ends in a deadlock; every year England is brought nearer face to face with the question; either the country must go to pieces, or capitalist production must: which is it to be? (The Depression of Trade, 1885: Lectures given to the Socialist League by William Morris, Internet Archives, William Morris Society).

Morris was wrong. England did not “*go to pieces*” but went on trading as a world power until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. What broke into pieces was the Second International.

Engels and political parties

In the Preface of 1892 to his book THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS IN ENGLAND, Engels argued that the end of British dominance of world trade would cut the strings between the British capitalist class and the working class and allow a socialist movement to develop as workers began to follow their own distinct class interests.

Twelve years later members of the working class were expelled from the SDF to form in 1904 the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

It is doubtful if Engels meant the Socialism of the SPGB whose founder members had been in the SDF. He had previously written off the SDF as a “*sect*” who had vulgarised Marxism. Engels also had little time for the Socialist League. He attributed Hyndman’s ability to “*reap the harvest*” to the “*stupidity of the Socialist League*” which would not “*concern itself with the living movement*” (MARX AND ENGELS, SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE, 1846-1895 p. 442).

Nor was Engels impressed with the Independent Labour Party under the leadership of Keir Hardie. He wrote-off Hardie and his Party in the following manner:

The Independent Labour Party is extremely indefinite in its tactics, and its leader, Keir Hardie, is a super-cunning Scot, whose demagogic tricks are not to be trusted for a minute (MARX AND ENGELS ON THE IRISH QUESTION, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1971, p. 356-57)

What did Engels mean by “*the living movement*”? He did not say. Engels most probably had in mind a British equivalent of the German SDP which he considered was a political party of the workers concerned “*with the living movement*” of the working class.

In a letter (May 12th 1894) to A. Sorge, Engels wrote worryingly of the SDF:

The Social Democratic Federation here shares with your German-American Socialists the distinction of being the only parties who have contrived to reduce Marxist Theory of development to a rigid orthodoxy, which the workers are not to reach as a result of their class consciousness, but which, like an article of faith, is to be forced down their throats at once and without development. That is why both remain mere sects and, as Hegel says, come from nothing through nothing to nothing... (MARX-ENGELS SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE 1976 p. 448)

Engels also looked at the success of the German SDP in gaining mass votes, trade union support and becoming a large and powerful party with representatives being voted into the Reichstag. Engels, although unhappy with the SDP’s Erfurt Programme, never publicly distanced himself from it although in correspondence was highly critical of their programme.

The Erfurt Programme contained the seeds of social democracy’s destruction. Reforms were offered in the *Erfurt Programme* (later adopted by the other social democratic parties) as stepping stones towards socialism attracting non-socialist workers. But these reforms increasingly became objects in their own right and the socialist goal was either relegated to an ultimate rather than immediate goal.

One important lesson the Socialist Party of Great Britain can offer the working class - but it is a hard and sobering lesson and it is this: there are no short cuts to the establishment of socialism. The class struggle is a struggle, a relentless struggle through solidarity with other workers, hard and often repetitious work and principled commitment to a socialist objective that requires the conscious, democratic and political action of a socialist majority.

SOCIALISTS ARE OPPOSED TO WAR

Socialists are opposed to war. When a war ends, who ends-up owning the oil and coal, the factories, and other capital and natural resources of defeated nation-states? Whichever way the international borders are re-drawn, the workers do not end up better off. No matter which side wins, those workers lucky enough to survive are still, at best, in much the same position as they were before the bloodbath. They must continue as before, selling their labour power for wages or salaries, and being exploited through the wages system.

Socialists, Socialist Revolution and Socialism

Introduction

In the Communist manifesto, Marx and Engels remarked with excitement on the speed of transmitting information through new forms of communication such as the canals and the railways. They looked at communication as a revolutionary tool.

Since the mid-19th century there has been the telephone and now the personal commuter with its ability to transmit real-time images throughout the globe.

However, despite the appearance in recent years of the Internet and the use of social media like Twitter and Facebook, the majority of workers still have not heard of the Socialist Party of Great Britain and its unique case for socialism.

Part of the problem is politics itself. Workers currently hold organized politics with contempt, cynicism and suspicion. Politics is associated with corruption and sleaze and this is reflected in the falling membership figures of most political parties. Single-issue politics are fashionable to join while becoming a member of a political party is not.

Socialists, we would point out, are not to blame for the current cynicism and lack of interest in politics held by a sizeable number of the population at General Elections. Nevertheless socialists suffer from the consequences of the withering contempt many workers have towards politicians— often deservedly so.

However, a socialist political party and socialist political organisation is indispensable for the working class to establish socialism. The means of production and distribution are owned by the capitalist class actively protected by the machinery of government, including the armed forces. A socialist revolution has to secure control of the machinery of government so that this “*...may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic* (Clause 6, OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, Socialist Party of Great Britain).

As a result of apathy and lack of interest in revolutionary politics, millions of workers currently have no idea of the practical feasibility of a social system without the labour market, wages and salaries and employment; a world-wide social system based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by and in the interests of all of society.

And by workers, socialists mean the millions of men and women along with their dependents who have to live-off wages and salaries or are self-employed. We mean a world-wide class of workers forced into employment because they do not own the means to living.

Who are the working class?

The working class forms a majority in society and who is exploited by a world-wide capitalist class. Furthermore, workers and capitalists are locked together in a class struggle over the intensity and extent of class exploitation and politically over the control of the world's resources and means of production and distribution.

Unfortunately, workers do not come into daily contact with socialist ideas in the way they do with, what Marx called, “*ruling class ideas*”; ideas used to justify class exploitation and class privilege. Workers are fed a constant drip-drip feed of propaganda by politicians, academics, religious leaders and the media telling them that capitalism is as natural as the air they breathe. And schools train workers to become pliant and obedient wage slaves and not to question the society they live in or consider alternatives to the profit system.

Workers are often told that they have identical interests with their employers. This false idea is reinforced at staged-managed and uncritical political PR events. Who has not seen images on television of the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer wearing hi-viz jackets and hard hats used as a symbolic stage props to give them some proletarian credibility?

There they are seen standing self-importantly on a podium surrounded by submissive, pliant and servile workers sitting in silence along with the owner of the factory (usually someone contributing to Party funds) as through the political message given to the captive audience is shared equally by everyone present. It is not.

In fact, workers do not have the same class interests as those who employ them. The interests of capitalists and workers are diametrically opposed to each other, particularly the struggle of workers to resist attacks on their working conditions and their struggle to increase wages and salaries.

Capitalist propaganda has a tendency to drown out the socialist proposition for production and distribution democratically and directly taking place to meet human need. Unfortunately, our opponents have millions to spend on their lies while we can just about afford the cost of the postage stamp. Today socialists are also confronted by well financed blogs, media hubs, and other on-line outlets for ruling class propaganda.

Socialism and political commitment

Another problem workers face in relation to socialist activity is political commitment. The pressure of employment, family life, and lack of time means that for many workers political activity is limited, and a dangerous trust is then placed in political leaders to think and make decisions for them.

Workers have to think and act politically for themselves. It is a prerequisite for a socialist. Depending on another person to do your thinking and acting for you prevents a worker joining with other socialists to consciously and politically abolish capitalism and establish socialism.

Added to this, as there are so few socialists on the ground, the result is that it is hard to counter the false assertion that “*there is no alternative to the market*” (TINA for short). The dogma that “*there is no real alternative*”, is a politics pursued by the late Margaret Thatcher (DAILY TELEGRAPH, 22 May 1980), a doctrine which everywhere sees capitalism triumphant and lasting forever. TINA was continued by Tony Blair who told a Labour Party Conference in September 1996: “*there are no longer bosses and workers, them and us*”. And after the fall of the Berlin Wall, all there was for Mr Blair to offer the working class was “*radical and progressive reforms*”, whatever that meant, within the capitalist framework of free markets, free trade and globalisation.

Our opponents wish there was no alternative to capitalism, no class struggle and no “*them and us*” but the reality is all so different. The socialist proposition for production and distribution just taking place democratically to meet human needs is a rational and practical proposition, not a speculative dream. In any case the working class runs capitalism from top to bottom albeit in the interest of another class. So why should they not be capable of running a social system in their own interest? And the class struggle takes place on a daily and weekly basis not out of the spite of employers and their politicians but because the capitalist class has to extract profit from the labour power of the working class.

Is human nature a problem?

Some of those who do come across the Socialist Party of Great Britain for the first time, write socialists off as starry-eyed utopians. Our error, they claim, is to ignore the reality of ‘*human nature*’.

We are accused of failing to take into account what motivates human beings, thereby ignoring violence, competition, greed and laziness which are taken by our opponents as innate characteristics of men and women.

For example the late Christopher Hitchens commenting on the “*dark side*” of human nature:

With a part of themselves, humans relish cruelty and war and absolute capricious authority, are bored by civilized and humane pursuits and understand only too well the latent connection between sexual repression and orgiastic vicarious collectivized release (WHY ORWELLMATTERS, Christopher Hitchens, p.191)

Predictably, Christopher Hitchens did not include himself in this crass and misanthropic description of human behaviour. Intellectuals like him are apparently immune to the baser instincts inflicted upon the rest of society.

Hitchens's view of human nature is a false and ugly depiction of men and women and a failure to understand how and why different social systems, with their unique social relationships, effect and determine social behaviour. Under certain social systems; war, carnage, and destruction are the norms. However, this does not mean there will always be forces causing conflict. Social behaviour and social relations are not static but change over time. Social co-operation is a constant feature of all social systems and is essential for human beings to survive at all.

For tens of thousands of years human beings lived in hunter-gatherer societies and it is only recently in human history that people have lived together in a capitalist society. The attributes of capitalism which people take for granted like wealth being produced by propertyless wage workers to be sold on a market with a view for profit, has in fact a very short history. When Marx wrote the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO in 1848 most of the world was still largely Feudal.

Different social systems, chattel slavery and feudalism, which have existed between hunter gatherer societies and capitalism have come and gone along with the social behaviour peculiar to them. People are no longer sacrificed to Gods in this country, nor witches burnt at the stake nor atheists barred from universities although new forms of coercion now exist placing restrictions and control over what can be said, where and to whom.

There is now no Divine Right of kings. Opponents of the state no longer have their tongues pierced or forehead branded or put into the pillory and whipped for criticizing the State. No cleric can now say, as the French Catholic theologian Jaques-Benigne Bossuet said in 1691: "*I have the right to persecute you because I am right and you are wrong*" (TRIGGER WARNING: IS THE FEAR OF BEING OFFENSIVE KILLING FREE SPEECH?, Mick Hume 2016). Over time, social systems have changed and so has people's behaviour. The process of human history is a result of the active interrelationship between the environment and the social activity of human beings in trying to survive.

In changing their social circumstance human beings have changed themselves and their social relations. And it is worth repeating again that if there is one constant feature of human behaviour then it is the human ability to co-operate with others for a common end. Without human-cooperation we would have died out as a species a long time ago. Selfishness is a barrier to human development. Constantly wanting to have rather than to be has negative environmental and social consequences.

Those who make the charge of utopianism against socialists forget that the conception of socialism adhered to by today's socialists was held by some notable 19th century figures like Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels and by other socialist pioneers. There were, too, some people who later became leaders in the Labour Party, who supported our view of socialism.

In the works of Karl Marx, notably the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, written over 150 years ago, he stated that socialism/communism (both words mean exactly the same thing) would entail the abolition of commodity production and exchange for profit. Marx concluded the MANIFESTO by stating:

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

In VALUE, PRICE AND PROFIT, Marx showed the forces in play against trade union action and went on to say:

Instead of the conservative motto: 'A fair day's pay for a fair day's work' they ought to inscribe on their banners the revolutionary watchwords: "Abolition of the wages system"

“Abolition of the wages system” means what it says. In socialism there will be no wages, no labour market and no classes. There will be no capitalism.

HOW WE LIVE TODAY

The question of health has threatened to become the major issue of the Blair government. Doctors and other medical staff work themselves to death in the NHS environment of overwork, poor pay and oppressive management always looking for a way to save money. The NHS does not exist to give the best medical care to workers. The best medical care goes to the capitalist class. The NHS exists to patch-up the working class to be fit for the labour market and employment. The NHS is run on utilitarian lines by accountants who try, at every twist and turn, to reduce the burden the capitalist class has of paying for it. Rationing, long waiting lists, and over-stretched resources are what the working class get (SOCIALIST STUDIES, no, 3, p. 3 Summer 1999)

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Socialism has never Existed -Yet

In the strict use of the word “*utopia*” or “*nowhere*” – made famous by Thomas More’s book UTOPIA, printed in 1516 - is applicable to socialism.

Socialism has never existed; neither in the past nor anywhere in the world today. There has never been a socialist majority in society convinced of the necessity of establishing socialism. And there has never been a socialist majority, who by its own efforts and without the need for leaders has established the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

Marx did not have much time for utopian speculation and blue prints of a future society. Like socialists today he began with society as it is. As early as the 1840s he wrote:

The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions, under which they live, but those which they find existing and those produced by their activity (THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY, ed. C.J. Arthur, p.42, 1970)

The salient feature of capitalism is the class struggle. Marx went on to explain the political reality of the class struggle with the use of his materialist conception of history and the labour theory of value. For Marx the class struggle was “*the motor force of history*”; in effect a political struggle over the ownership of the means of production and distribution.

Even in the 1840s the class struggle was obvious to social commentators, socialist or otherwise. Marx, in fact, said he was not the first to notice the class struggle giving that honour to historians like Augustin Thierry. However, Marx went on to explain through his theory of surplus value why the class struggle took place under capitalism showing that workers produce more value than they receive back in wages and salaries. Surplus value, as Marx called it, was the source of the unearned income of rent, interest and profit going to the rentier, financier and industrialist capitalist.

What Marx did notice, when he turned his attention to capitalism and the class struggle, was the formation by workers of trade unions, despite the capitalist state passing anti-combination legislation, and imprisoning and deporting trade unionists.

Despite unfavourable political conditions, 19th century workers still took strike action to get more wages and to improve their working conditions while political groups like the Chartists pushed for the extension of the franchise. Workers took all this action against the capitalists and their state independent of any socialist theory.

Marx often quoted with approval the maxim of the poet Johann Goethe: “*In the beginning was the deed*”. And from the class struggle between capitalists and workers Marx drew this very important conclusion:

All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletariat movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority (COMMUNIST MANIFESTO)

Consequently socialists, who put forward a practical political programme to abolish capitalism and establish socialism, first start with society as it confronts workers.

The first clause of the SPGB’s DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, for example, states:

That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced

Socialists take as our starting point the class relationship between employers and workers where the means of production and distribution are privately owned and, with the existence of the “*the proletariat movement*” described by Marx in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, socialism is not abstract theoretical and utopian speculation.

The socialist case for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism derives from what is taking place within capitalism, notably the class struggle and the reasons for the class struggle. Utopians we are not.

Constant and unremitting capitalist propaganda

So why have most workers not heard the socialist case while many who have dismiss it as utopian?

The answer is simple. Workers are faced with the constant and unremitting capitalist propaganda of the three main political parties: the Tories, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party as well as the SNP and minor parties like the Greens and UKIP. These powerful anti-socialist organisations have vast funds at their disposal, which socialists do not have. They also have access to the newspapers, radio and television. These political organisations come before the workers and say:

Don’t take any notice of the socialists we’ll make capitalism alright for you, you support Mr. Corbyn, or you support Mr. Fallon or you support, or you support Mrs. May, one or the other will make capitalism right for you.

This is part of what socialists are up against; an unremitting and constant pro-capitalism propaganda. We are not conspiracy theorists. The capitalist class has its own interests to pursue and the working class has its own interests. And they are not the same. They are separate interests, diametrically opposed to each other. The mistake most workers make is to confuse their own distinct interests with the interests of employers.

This is not to say that the capitalist class has a singular interest. They do not as the recent EU referendum exposed only too well. The capitalist class is divided, particularly over the question of taxation, who has to pay it and how much. What unites the capitalist class is the defense and maintenance of their privilege, wealth and power. And they have the resources to pay journalists and others for pro-capitalist and anti-socialist propaganda.

The capitalist class spends billions of pounds in the defense of its interest. They can buy people to defend their interests: academics, think tank experts, politicians and journalists. Socialists are disproportionately underfunded.

Socialists, on the contrary, lack the resources to mount a sustained criticism of capitalist ideas and beliefs. We cannot buy newspapers like the SUN or the DAILY MAIL or television stations like FOX NEWS.

As the journalist Mick Hume, one time editor of *Living Marxism* – or, as one wit had it “*dead Leninism*” – had to

admit in his recent book TRIGGER WARNING: IS THE FEAR OF BEING OFFENSIVE KILLING FREE SPEECH? (2016 Chapter 7), billionaire employers like Rupert Murdoch, the Barclay brothers and Richard Desmond have the power to express their ideas and pursue their interests, a power which the majority of society simply just do not enjoy. Employers can also use commercial pressure and contracts to suppress free speech. Quite a lot of trade union time is taken up countering the bullying tactics of employers.

Socialists cannot pay six figure salaries to journalists any more than we can establish “*think-tanks*” – such as a Karl Marx Institute - to counter the propaganda coming out of, say, the Adam Smith Institute and the hundreds of pro-capitalist institutes around the world. But we do our best under the political circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Socialists also have an important factor in our favour. Capitalism can never be able to be run or be reformed to work by politicians and governments in the interest of all society. The capitalist class and its politicians, although they divide and rule, still have to attack sections of the working class. Capitalists cannot leave workers alone in their pursuit for profit; they are forever trying to increase the intensity and intensity of exploitation. Capitalists are always trying to extract more profit out of workers. They have to under the pressure of competition.

Look at the recent legislation against workers which the French so-called “*Socialist*” government rushed through in May this year. The French government has made it easier for employers to sack workers. “*Labour market liberalization*” they called it. Workers throughout France fought back in a series of strikes and mass protests undertaken by the Nuit Debout movement. But opposition was difficult with unemployment running at 10.7% and only 8% of the workers in unions, mostly in the public sector, against a determined government ready to use force to break the strikes.

Yet the French government, no matter what political complexion it happens to be, has to attack the workers and take sides with the employers.. The same applies to the economic situation in Greece where the leftwing party Syriza, once praised by the capitalist left and feared by the Troika made up of the EU Commission, the ECB and the IMF, has carried out deeper austerity measures than those of its conservative predecessors. Such austerity policies mean that pensioners and workers are forced to tighten their belts to compensate for the corruption of previous governments and tax evasion by the rich.

The fact that employers and their state cannot and will not leave workers alone in the pursuit of profit does create within the working class questioning, dissent and the making of socialists; although not enough currently to make a trickle into a fast flowing movement for revolutionary change. Capitalism though makes socialists - a revolutionary process the capitalist class and its political agents cannot stop. They cannot make capitalism run in the interest of all society so cannot stop workers becoming socialists..

WE THE WORKING CLASS.

..Socialists urge all members of the working class to unite, to end this global system of exploitation, with its class struggle, wars and poverty. Often we are told that the working class has died out. Now we are supposed to be ‘middle class’. Or else part of the growing ‘Precariat’. Throughout Britain, there are food banks and ‘pay day lenders’ / loan sharks. Books about PAUPERLAND (2013) and BREADLINE BRITAIN (2015) document the distress felt many low-paid or unemployed workers. A poll says that over 60% of Brits now see themselves as “working class”. ‘Divide and rule’ is an old trick. Subdividing the working class distracts from the recognition that almost all of us are part of the majority class, the 99% who must sell their labour-power for wages.

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Nationalisation is not Socialism

Socialists have to face a political problem not of our own making. Workers are told that there are socialist and communist countries in the world like China, Cuba and Vietnam. This is not the case and it takes time to argue why this is not so.

The essential characteristic of capitalism is that it is an integrated world-wide system of class exploitation which produces goods for sale and profit. China, Cuba and Vietnam all produce commodities for profit and the working class in all three countries do not own the means of production and distribution and remain, like workers elsewhere in the world, an exploited class producing more social wealth than they receive in wages and salaries.

Capitalism is a social system where the means of production and distribution is owned by a minority capitalist class to the exclusion of the working class majority. Not only is '*surplus value*' extracted from the working class in these countries but workers are also engaged in a constant class struggle over the extent and intensity of exploitation.

There is no fundamental difference between a worker employed in Vietnam or China and a worker employed in Britain or the US. Although there is the absence in the former countries of free trade unions and freedoms of political association and dissemination of socialist information, workers in Vietnam and China do not own the means of production and distribution and are, as a consequence, forced onto the labour market to sell their labour-power, or their ability to work, for a wage or a salary..

The problem is compounded further by many workers believing that former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries were once '*communist*' countries, fundamentally different to Western countries like the US and the UK. Workers are told and believe that "*communism failed*" in these countries because it was an economically inefficient social system compared with the supposed '*efficiency*' of Western capitalism so that eventually the whole system collapsed.

Again this is an error. The Soviet Union may have collapsed for economic reasons such as the inability to compete with other capitalist countries on the world market but they were not socialist/communist reasons.

From a socialist perspective, pre-1991 Russia was no more communist or socialist than China or Vietnam is today. Russian state capitalism was, in effect, large scale nationalisation. Russia traded on the world market, the working class in Russia was exploited and unable to form free trade unions. Furthermore the Russian economy was not immune from economic laws acting on commodity production and exchange for profit.

Nevertheless, a day does not go by without a political commentator in the media stating that Marx's ideas have been refuted by experience, that Communism/Socialism is dead and buried and Western capitalism is everywhere triumphant. They wish!

For those workers still unconvinced that countries like China are not capitalist we suggest a little test. Visit China and go to one of the shops in Beijing and say to the sales manager: "*I don't intend to pay for the goods displayed in the shop*". The manager will say: "*Say that again, you aren't going to pay for them*". And you will say: "*Yes*". He will ring up the police and say: "*I've got an eccentric tourist here who thinks we've got communism or socialism and doesn't think he has to pay for things*". And if you try to leave the shop without paying for the goods, you will be arrested. And it will be no good at the trial to offer in your defense that you thought you were in a "*communist*" country.

Abolition of money

Once the bogus argument that Russia was once communist has been dealt with, the next question put to socialists surrounds the absence of money and exchange in a socialist society. Some workers find it unbelievable that you can have a society without money and exchange. The economic textbooks might tell you about the marvels that the monetary system is supposed to give society but the reality is altogether different. Money and finance are in constant disarray within capitalism.

There appears always to be a monetary or financial crisis going on somewhere in the world. Finance ministers and leading bankers are dragged at a minute's notice to hastily convened conferences to tackle turbulence on the

currency markets.

Governments are forced to enact banking regulations, impose stress tests for banks, engage in currency inflation and ‘quantitative easing’, and to seriously consider bizarre economic ideas like the use of “*helicopter money*” to be handed out by central banks to stimulate demand. And economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund was set up post war as an international economic institution to try to resolve the problems of the world’s monetary system albeit without success.

It is only Marx who gave a useful account of money as a unit of account, a medium of exchange and a store of value.

Marx was also able to explain inflation which is caused by governments going on year after year printing and putting into circulation hundreds of millions of pounds of additional paper money not needed for trade.

Marx also placed money and exchange in the context of class power and social alienation. In the ECONOMIC AND PHGILOSOPHICAL MANUSCRIPTS of 1844 he wrote:

The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money’s properties are my – the possessor’s – properties and essential powers. Thus, what I am and am capable of is by no means determined by my individuality.

And he continued

I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most beautiful of women. Therefore I am not ugly, for the effect of ugliness – its deterrent power – is nullified by money. I, according to my individual characteristics, am lame, but money furnishes me with twenty-four feet. Therefore I am not lame. I am bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, stupid; but money is honoured, and hence its possessor. Money is the supreme good, therefore its possessor is good. Money, besides, saves me the trouble of being dishonest: I am therefore presumed honest. I am brainless, but money is the real brain of all things and how then should its possessor be brainless? Besides, he can buy clever people for himself, and is he who has power over the clever not more clever than the clever?

And he concluded:

Do not I, who thanks to money am capable of all that the human heart longs for, possess all human capacities? Does not my money, therefore, transform all my incapacities into their contrary? (Marxist.org)

Marx also highlighted money’s anti-social and destructive attributes with a pertinent Shakespearean about gold:

*This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions; bless the accursed;
Make the hoar leprosy adored; place thieves.
And give them title, knee and approbation,*

*With senators on the bench; this is it,
That makes the wappen’d widow wed again;
...Come damned earth,
Thou common whore of mankind*

(TIMON OF ATHENS Act 4, Scene 3 quoted in CAPITAL VOLUME 1, chapter 2, Money, or the Circulation of Commodities, p. 230))

It is a full-time job for politicians and economists to try to get to grips with the world’s financial and monetary markets. Capitalism is continually throwing up monetary and financial problems and there is no solution to them. Money is important to capitalism because it is a social system based on exchange. Socialism on the other hand will produce and distribute goods and services directly to meet human need. In such a social system money will be irrelevant.

In socialism there will be no need for monetary transactions or for barter. The working class possesses all the

technical know-how, physical ability and intelligence to establish socialism. Once the socialist framework of common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society is in place, workers will not have to exchange anything in order to have direct access to what they and their families need to live worthwhile lives. Workers will just produce what is needed and workers and their families will take what they need to live well, flourish and take part in the affairs of society.

Critics of the socialist argument that production and distribution in socialism will not need money just cannot get out of their capitalist skins. They cannot free their minds from buying and selling and markets, just as defenders of feudalism could not think outside the doctrine of the divine right of kings and the servitude of peasants to kings, bishops and lords.

Use your imagination and think for yourself

Marx once said that workers should question everything. We would also add that workers should use their imagination and think for themselves. And a good place to start exercising the imagination is science fiction. Take look at STAR TREK. STAR TREK shows a post-scarcity society - the combination of practically unlimited energy (from anti-matter/matter reactions focused through dilithium crystals) and replication technology where almost every want of humans can be produced without the need for capital or labour (<https://www.quora.com/How-can-the-world-function-without-money-in-Star-Trek>).

Science fiction authors ask the reader to use their imagination; to boldly go where no one has gone before, so to speak. Two notable science fiction writers who describe future post-scarcity societies where there is no money are Ken MacLeod (THE CASSINI DIVISION) and the late Ian Banks (THE DIAMOND AGE and THE CULTURE). Incidentally Ken MacLeod has our web site **Socialist Studies** as a link to his own web site, and he has been quoted as having been influenced by the SPGB's conception of a future moneyless, wageless and stateless society of free and co-operative human beings.

And it should be remembered that in human evolution, capitalism is not a very old social system; historically its existence is just a mere few centuries old. In a Neolithic cave at Lascaux in France there are two sets of images of animals about a few meters away from each other; the first painting was produced some thousands of years prior to the second. Capitalism, as an integrated world-wide system of class exploitation is only about 150 years old. How capitalism operates has a history as Marx showed in part eight of CAPITAL, volume 1, in the section *So-called Primitive Accumulation*. In this section he commented on the arrival of capitalism on the stage of history with these words:

...capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt: (So-called Primitive Accumulation Chap. 30 p. 926)

There is nothing natural about a market economy which exchanges commodities for a profit and monetary gain. And our critics forget that although the working class majority think and act in terms of an exchange-based social system this will not be the case in socialism. The premise of a socialist society is the existence of a socialist majority throughout the world.

Unlike capitalism, there will be equilibrium in socialism between what society produces, distributes and consumes. Men and women will use the process of democratic planning, the use of computing, information technology, robotics, artificial intelligence, stock control and other technical means useful to monitoring the production and distribution of goods and services. There will also be practical assessments of production and distribution on ecological and health and safety grounds. Monetary exchange will not come into the equation. The central consideration for socialist society will be production and distribution directly for use to enable men and women to take a full and democratic role in society where, to quote Marx:

The free development of each is the condition for the free development of all (Communist Manifesto)

Did you think socialism has been tried and failed? Then think again and try this thought experiment...There has been a socialist revolution throughout the world, consciously, democratically and politically carried out by a socialist majority with no leaders. There is now common ownership without borders, nation states, wars, money, employers and the wages system. And there is now democratic control of the means of production by all of society. Raw materials, factories, machines, transport and communication systems and distribution networks are now being used solely to produce and distribute goods and services directly to meet the needs of all society rather than the anti-social objective of profit-making. Work is being carried out creatively and willingly by free men and women. Labour is social and cooperative. There are no classes, class interests or class privilege. And there is the guiding principle: "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs".

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Capitalist Politics: Divide and Rule but for How Long?

The skill of capitalist politicians lies in dividing the working class. They are extremely successful at doing this partly because workers, constrained and limited by the exploitative wages system, are already bitterly divided among themselves over competition for jobs, housing, health care and other necessities of life constrained and limited by the exploitative wages system.

Some workers refuse to accept they are in the working class believing they have superior social status. They refer to themselves as “*middle-class*” because of where they live, where they went to school and what they consume. Academics make the situation worse. Recently a group of academics claimed there were 7 gradations of social class in British Society; from the “*elite*” to the “*precariat*” (BBC NEWS 7th December 2015).

This political ignorance is exploited by capitalist’s politicians and the media. The MAIL ON SUNDAY, for example, crowed, some years back, at the failure of a public sector workers’ strike involving teachers and council workers, writing the strikers off as “*middle-class failures*” (3rd July 2010).

From a socialist perspective, the “*middle-class*” is a myth. Office workers and so-called “*professional*” workers, like university lecturers and architects are all forced onto the labour market for exactly the same reason as car-workers, train drivers and nurses. And that is because workers do not own the means of production and distribution.

When the junior doctors recently went on strike against their employers they did so as workers not as ‘*middle-class professionals*’. And it was other workers who supported them in their struggle against the lengthening of the working day, the imposition of new labour contracts and the interests of a spiteful and vindictive state employer.

Recently THE TIMES informed us that a third of ‘*professional*’ workers are too short of cash to pay a £500 bill. We were told that:

...since the financial crisis wages have fallen by up to 10 per cent on some calculations when adjusted for inflation, with companies reluctant to offer staff generous pay-rises while the recovery is fragile. According to the office for national statistics ONS) average disposable income recovered slightly last year to £30, 900 but is still below the pre down-turn 2007 level of £31,600.

The article went on to say:

In the same period the cost of living has risen steadily, with bills for food and gas and transport fares all higher. Households with children have faced an average rise in the cost of living of 2.4 per cent each year over the past decade, according to the ONS

Does this not show one class experiencing a major economic problem caused by capitalism thereby having the same interests in resolving it by the establishment of socialism?

The capitalist left, like the SWP and Counterfire, also undermine a clear understanding of class and class relations. These organisations deny the fact that university professors, scientists, engineers and architects are members of the working class. They locate these workers within the '*middle-class*' not the working class.

This is wrong. Workers are only employed if it is profitable for capitalists to employ them. Architects and surveyors lose their jobs because of a trade depression in the building industry while scientists are sacked because research and development is cut from a company's budget to save money. Under capitalism, unemployment is a great leveller.

Another division within the working class, which undermines common interest and solidarity, is the pitting of public sector workers against private sector workers. Public sector workers are depicted in the media as lazy, too well paid and with gold-plated pensions. The reality is totally different; carers and hospital staff, for example, work long hours, are often paid a pittance and will receive pensions "*cast in lead*".

Workers are also divided over immigration which is exploited by politicians for votes. This was seen during and after the recent EU referendum campaign. Immigrants were misleadingly and mendaciously blamed by Brexit politicians and the mass media for causing low pay, for taking away jobs, for displacing workers on housing lists and so on. This misinformation was believed by many workers and split the working class. Many workers saw immigration rather than capitalism as the cause of their social and economic problems rather than capitalism. Workers did not challenge capitalism which creates the problems the working class face on a daily basis. It is easier, but stupid, for workers to blame members of their own class rather than the endemic inadequacies of the profit system.

Nor did many British workers see immigrants as part of their own class with identical interests distinct and opposed to the interests of employers and their politicians. Class solidarity was trampled underfoot as workers rushed to petty lance corporals, blonde mop-headed rabble-rousers and the racism of the various authoritarian and fascist groups which made up the Brexit camp.

Then there is the division of workers along national lines during war where one set of workers fights another. Workers, as Marx noted in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, have no country. Workers have no flag to die for and workers have no interest in the nation state. And workers have no interest in war. Workers do not own raw resources; they have no trade routes to protect or strategic spheres of influence to defend. More importantly workers do not own the means of production and distribution.

The unemployed have also been a target by politicians as a means to divide the working class against itself. George Osborne made a typically condescending remark at the last election about "*hard working families*". He painted a picture of people on their way to work walking past the closed curtains of the "*skivers*" still in bed and living off state-handouts. Predictably, the media then directed their Orwellian two minutes of hate towards the unemployed.

Distorting Socialism

And when it comes to trashing socialism anything goes. Obama and the Pope are denounced as "*socialists*". Even the economist Lord Keynes is regarded by some conservatives, as a dangerous "*socialist*" and any form of state interference in the economy is misleadingly described as "*socialism*". As it has been said of conservatism as a political doctrine; it is the highest form of ignorance and the lowest form of thought.

Anyone who criticises, threatens or censures the profit system is fair game and is also denounced as an "*evil socialist*". According to one DAILY MAIL journalist, James Delingpole, there is even supposed to be a world-wide conspiracy of well-placed "*cultural Marxists*" taking over institutions like the BBC (*How the BBC fell for a Marxist Plot to destroy civilisation from within*, 27th September 2011).

This fantasy world of secret conspiracies by "*cultural Marxists*", often found in the pages of the DAILY MAIL, has its dark side. The convicted terrorist, Anders Brevik quoted crazed writings about "*Marxist conspiracies*" by, among others, the former DAILY MAIL journalist Melanie Philips and Jeremy Clarkson, one of the leading thinkers in

David Cameron's Chipping Norton set, in his 1500 page Manifesto. Brevik inveighed against "Cultural Marxist traitors" who, he believed, had forced "multiculturalism" onto Western society.

(<http://www.theweek.co.uk/politics/breivik-massacre/3613/what-made-anders-breivik-quote-daily-mail>)

For six-figure salaries most journalists will say or write anything derogatory about socialism. The meaning of socialism is distorted and attributed to every act of genocide. They just do not care. No counter argument will dissuade them from writing their poison. They exist just to produce ruling class ideas and an apologetics for their employers.

There is another problem associated with politicians. There are those who describe themselves as "socialists" like Bernie Sanders in the US and Jeremy Corbyn in the UK. What are the alleged credentials of those politicians who claim to be a socialist?

Corbyn is supposed to be a socialist but his policies have nothing to do with the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution. Instead he and his many supporters, informed by the writings of Maynard Keynes not Karl Marx, would be satisfied with some form or "*managed capitalism*".

In fact the Labour Party's recent policy announcement of a "*New Economics*" is not new at all. It is very old; dating back to the post- Second World War policy of the Labour Government whose popular capitalism of a mixed economy, Keynesianism ended catastrophically 34 years later in the so-called "*Winter of Discontent*".

We really do need Socialism

Capitalist politicians say to the working class: "*you really don't need socialism*". They tell workers that socialism is not a viable alternative to the profit system.

"*There is no alternative*" is the dogma of the ruling class. Instead they offer workers "*popular capitalism*", "*regulated capitalism*" or a "*fairer capitalism*" in the belief that things will get better and better.

As Marx noted, it does not matter if workers are tied to capital by chains of iron or by chains of gold they will still remain an exploited class. The working class will still experience all the negative consequences of the profit system - war, poverty, social alienation and unemployment - that their grandparents did.

And we do not have to dig far to get some evidence for this. At the mail order retailers, Sports Direct, workers have become "*mere appendages to the machine*"; dehumanized and reduced to disposable units of production. And in her article *Brutal and Inhumane way to treat staff, and Sports Direct is not alone* (GUARDIAN 8th June 2016), the journalist Felicity Lawrence noted that workers, in another retailer similar to Sports Direct:

...wear computerized wristbands that measure how many arm movements they make while picking goods for dispatch...

While in the US:

...assembly lines run so fast that even a short toilet break disrupts production. Staff are meant to signal to a "Floater" or relief worker to take their place before having to go to the toilet, but...they are often denied a break, so that some have taken to wearing Pampers in case they need to urinate or defecate while on the line.

Even the TIMES newspaper, in an editorial commenting on the plundering of BHS and the way in which Sports Direct treated its workers, was forced to attack what it called "*crass capitalism*" (9th June 2016). Can capitalism be "*crass*" any more than it can become "*unacceptable*" or "*crony*" or "*Anglo-Saxon*"? Forced to defend capitalism its supporters are continually forced to place adjectives in front of the word to make it more palatable. Ironically, THE ECONOMIST now refers to Russia and China as "*state capitalism*". Capitalism, though, is just capitalism; an exploitative class system with a revolutionary beginning in human history through class struggle and, one day, a revolutionary end through class struggle.

In comparison to the life-style enjoyed by the capitalist class who live off unearned income from rent, interest and profit, the workers only get second best - and sometimes not even second. There used to be an old slogan of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) which stated: "*Only the best is good enough for the working class*". That slogan was adopted specifically for architecture in the 1930s by the émigré Russian architect, Berthold Lubetkin; he designed the Penguin Pool at London Zoo and the Finsbury Health Centre in Islington, and he argued that "*nothing is too good for ordinary people*". Quite so.

Workers deserve to drink top quality champagne, receive the best health care and housing but this will only take place with a socialist framework in which all the needs of people can be met. Workers should get the best the means of production, technology and science can provide. Why let a class of parasites – the so-called "*I per cent*" of the population – enjoy the best? Surely the remaining 99% should expect a life better than second best?

Socialists say to workers that they have got to get rid of this system of commodity production and exchange for profit. Workers have to act in their own interest and organize consciously and politically into a principled socialist party to capture political power including the armed forces. Workers have to use the revolutionary vote to elect socialist delegates to Parliament. No one else is going to do it for them.

Pursuing class interests requires struggle and effort. Workers, for example, did not solve the problems they face by voting in the recent EU referendum. Workers do not act in their class interest by voting for capitalist political parties at elections. To do that is a waste of a vote. It solves nothing.

The trouble with capitalism

The trouble about capitalism is that the means of production are not used to their full capacity. Marx was quite clear on this in the Communist Manifesto. He wrote:

The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them.

The restraint imposed upon the forces of production by the social relations of production within capitalism is the ultimate cause of periodic economic crises and trade depressions. And this contradiction also generates the class struggle between the capitalist class and working class because where human need conflicts with profit-making then human needs come second despite the potential for production to meet those needs.

Take the example of the periodic economic crises which have taken place for over the last three hundred years. Marx, more than anyone else, gave a sound explanation. He said:

...capitalist production moves through certain periodic cycles. It moves through a state of quiescence, growing animation, prosperity, overtrade, crisis and stagnation (WAGES, PRICE AND PROFIT IN SELECTED WORKS VOL 1, p. 440)

Capitalists are usually wrong in their forecast about production because capitalism is anarchic and unpredictable. Employers do not just say to the workers: "*get on with the job, produce as much as you can*". Employers look at production and the market, and they say to themselves: "*Now, how many of these commodities will we be able to sell before our competitors step in and undercut us? And how much can we sell at a profit?*" ,

And when the employers have formed an opinion on how much they think they can sell their commodities for, they then get the workers to produce as much as they thinks they can sell. If they cannot sell all their commodities at a profit and they make a loss, they sack the unprofitable workers and cut back on production. Capitalists don't want to produce things that they cannot sell at a profit even if closing down production means high levels of unemployment, stock-piling of unsold commodities, unmet human need and the destruction of capital itself.

Look at what is happening today to world prices of key raw materials. The slow-down in the Chinese economy has meant mining firms have been unable to sell all their commodities and have had to accept lower prices. International mining giant Anglo-American was forced to make a reduction in its workforce from 135,000 to just 50,000 and to scrap its dividend until the end of 2016 (DAILY TELEGRAPH 9 December 2015). The crisis has come as shock out of the blue. Chinese capitalism was going to continue to grow from one year to the next – or so we were told by the experts - but it didn't.

Here is a report of the problems now facing the Australian economy:

... Australia was uniquely vulnerable to China's slowdown and its move away from heavy investment. Australia produces a third of the world's iron ore, and China's slump has sent the price of iron ore from a peak of \$185 per metric ton in 2011 to below \$60. ...Australia's unemployment rate, at 6.2 percent, far exceeds the U.S. rate of 5 percent. And the Australian dollar has fallen 14 percent against the dollar this year.

Four years ago, Port Hedland was enjoying a roaring business loading iron ore onto ships bound for China. Its homes commanded boomtown prices. It couldn't last, and it didn't. As China's super-charged growth slowed, Port Hedland's good times ended. John Briggs of Port Hedland's Pilbara Heart Real Estate says he's never seen a bust like this: "It's been dramatic, mate. Absolutely dramatic"

<http://www.usnews.com/news/business/articles/2015/11/12/from-australia-to-zambia-slowing-china-economy-causes-pain>

When commodities cannot be sold over a period of time in one or several sectors of the economy, capitalists are faced with an economic crisis. When there are no buyers, there are unsold commodities, idle plant, and laid off, unprofitable workers, and creditors to pay and there is no money coming in.

Marx and Crises

Marx wrote extensively on economic crises and trade depressions. For Marx they were a consequence of laws and contractions acting on commodity production and exchange for profit. And it was Marx who gave a general but valid and sound explanation for the “*ultimate reason*” for all real crises. He said:

The ultimate reason for all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as opposed to the drive of capitalist production to develop the productive forces as though only the absolute consuming power of society constituted their limit (CAPITAL VOL., III Ch. XV, p. 484Penguin ed)

And economic crises have unseen consequences; both economic and political. The 2008 economic crisis was no different. It experienced two unexpected consequences actually beneficial to socialism.

First, Marx and his writings became fashionable again. At the height of the economic crisis, the former French President Nicolas Sarkozy was photographed reading volume 1 of Marx's CAPITAL. What he made of reading Marx we were never told (EVENING STANDARD 30th March 2009).

Marx was even read by mainstream economists in the vain attempt to find an explanation of what went wrong in the economy and how it could be put together again. The FINANCIALTIMES even ran a Face Book Page with accompanying video of some very serious looking intellectuals asking the question “*Can Marx Save Capitalism*” (20th February 2012).

Of course, economists and politicians will not find in CAPITAL instructions on how to get out of an economic crisis any more than they will find instructions on how to run capitalism. The question of Marx also highlighted the fear of the dogmatists who are petrified by any criticism of capitalism. And there certainly is an underlying fear held by those who dogmatically deny any alternative to capitalism. They all carry a secret fear shared by all dogmatists; a fear of being wrong.

So any criticism of capitalism rings alarm bells. There are suddenly imagined Marxists everywhere; a global conspiracy plot. Step forward, as an example of this political paranoia, the DAILY TELEGRAPH; a newspaper that proudly supports “*business interests*”. According to the DAILY TELEGRAPH (19th May, 2016) the new political correspondent of ITV news is an “*expert on Marxism*”. Apparently she was also taught “*Marxist economics*” at University College London.

Assuming its readership had never come across Marxism, the DAILY TELEGRAPH then went on to kindly explain that Communism was characterized by: “*a classless society and common ownership of the means of production*”. Socialists could not have put this better ourselves. A million or so readers being told what Communism meant over their morning toast and marmalade.

And it gets better.

The DAILY TELEGRAPH then went on to describe what Marxism meant. It turned to the pages of THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY for a definition of Marxism. And this is what the OED said:

Central to Marxist theory is an explanation of social change in terms of economic factors, according to which the means of production provide the economic base which determines or influences the political and ideological superstructure...The history of society can be viewed as showing progressive stages in the ownership of the means of production and, hence the control of political power...Marx and Engels predicted the final revolutionary overthrow of capitalism by the proletariat and the eventual attainment of a classless society.

Actually, it is not a bad definition of Marxism as dictionary definitions go. So Dr. Hertz need not bothered to have gone to University College London to learn all about “*Marxism*” or even purchase a copy of SOCIALIST STUDIES for her enlightenment. She could have easily just read the DAILY TELEGRAPH.

This brings us on to the second unintended consequence of the economic crisis we have been through. The crises has not only meant Marx’s works being read again but also that the word “*capitalism*” has become to be widely used in the media in a way that it had not been prior to 2008. This is very dangerous political own goal for those charged with politically and economically defending the interests of the capitalist class. The last thing employers want is their social system to be named and known. If workers start to become aware that we live in capitalism with its attendant exploitation and set of hostile anti-working class ideas and beliefs that is a good place to start on a journey to become socialists.

True, workers’ current understanding of capitalism might be confused. Nonetheless, they will at least have begun to recognize that capitalism is a historically located social system in human evolution with a beginning somewhere in the past, and more importantly, a revolutionary termination point somewhere in the future.

The wide-spread use of the word “*capitalism*” by the media and politicians, ironically, is not down to the success or otherwise of socialists getting their ideas across to the working class but is instead the result of the contradictions, crises and conflicts within capitalism itself. Economically, politically and socially capitalism’s politicians, academics and media have serious problems which become more and more entrenched the older capitalism gets.

These severe and seemingly intractable problems – the environment and the economy to name but two – will not be going away and they will not be resolved by the very same social system that caused them in the first place. To resolve these problems, of course, first requires the establishment of socialism by a working class majority. And while the working class continues to give its support to leaders these problems will persist.

As we look with some disappointment at the trickle that currently constitutes the “*socialist movement*” we can at least take comfort from the fact that the unsolvable social and economic problems caused by capitalism really does create its own class of “*gravediggers*” although not in the numbers necessary to make a socialist revolution possible.

Profits versus Human Needs

Capitalism is governed by the market and the law of value where the value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labour time that goes into its production. Marx showed at great length in, CAPITAL, how capitalism worked, the contradictions it creates as it passes from one crisis to the next, and how and why the profit system can never be made to work in the interest of all society.

Marx explained class exploitation through his theory of surplus value and he showed that the capitalist class lives off the unearned income of rent, interest and profit.

Marx showed that capitalist production and exchange takes place through a trade cycle of boom and bust, and he went on to explain why capitalists introduce technology to displace labour and why they require, what he called, “*the industrial reserve army of the unemployed*” to hold down wages. He also explained the role of money and the cause of inflation, and the role of banking, credit and finance.

Marx studied capitalism at great length and showed that the economic laws acting on commodity production and exchange for profit cannot be prevented from operating by passing economic reforms. Marx’s understanding of capitalism was vindicated by the failure of Keynesianism and monetarism. None of these theories could prevent economic crises from occurring or prevent high levels of unemployment when capitalism passed into an economic depression.

Marx explained why economic crises and depressions occur and showed why there is nothing the capitalists and their politicians can do about it. And experience has shown that no government has ever been able to control the periodic rise and fall of unemployment. Unemployment takes its own course and there is nothing governments and their economists can do about it.

Having made these points about Marx’s useful contribution to an understanding of capitalism, we just want to add something else. Socialists would suggest to workers to take as an analogy of capitalism, a motor car. It is a useful analogy to illustrate the differences between the capitalist parties and the failure of politicians to be able to run capitalism in the interest of all society.

All the different parties; the Liberal Democrats, Tories, Labour and the rest, all say that socialism is unnecessary. They oppose us, but they differ among themselves as both about what has to be done and what they say about capitalism also differs.

Mrs. May says capitalism’s fine if you have free markets, free trade, little or no regulation and unbridled competition. Mr. Corbyn wants a regulated and “*fairer*” capitalism with a sprinkling of nationalisation. The Liberal Democrats want to see the introduction of “*John Lewis*” capitalism where there is a harmonious “*partnership*” between workers and employers.

However, when in office they all run capitalism to suit the interest of the capitalist class which includes trying to keep wages down so that profit can be made. And of course they are also faced with the capitalist dilemma of trying to put pressure on other governments to allow British goods into their markets as well as having to contend with the other day-to-day problems that capitalism throws up.

Let us take a motor car analogy for this sort of disagreement. All the political parties of capitalism agree that the car is not at all road-worthy and the windscreen is so filthy that the driver cannot clearly see the road ahead.

Now the Labour Party says that the car needs a different driver to the Tories, it needs a compassionate and principled man like Mr. Corbyn at the wheel instead of the hard hearted and evil Mrs. May. Both the Tories and the Social Democrats attack the Labour Party over this. They say that Corbyn does not know where he’s driving because he is a trouble-making extremist who turns the wheel further and further to the left. The Liberal Democrats say it would be better if they had two drivers both sitting there together with their hands on the wheel at the same time. The Liberal

Democrats like “*partnership*”. Or so they thought until they were hammered by the electorate at the last election.

Among the car’s defects is the gauge. Every now and then the car stalls and temporally stops. This is what capitalism is like; it periodically goes into an economic crisis and trade depression.

Each capitalist party has its own group of mechanics with their own pet solution as to why the car has stalled. In capitalism, these are the economists who make a living showing why either why crises will never happen again or what central bankers or politicians have to do to do if an economic crisis occurs. They are as useful as astrologers.

As an example of the failure of academic economists to understand and predict the movement of capitalism from one economic crisis to the next there is the assertion on the trade cycle made by Professor Robert Lucas, the President of the American Economic Association, the body representing all pro-capitalist economists in the US. He told his audience in 2003, that “*the central problem of depression-prevention has been resolved*” (quoted in THE GREAT RECESSION: PROFIT CYCLES, ECONOMIC CRISIS: A MARXIST VIEW, M. Roberts, ch. 49, p. 281).

Professor Lucas was certainly wrong in his economic forecast. Does he care? He was not stripped of his professorship, forced to return his ‘Nobel Prize in economics’ and drummed out of the University of Harvard in disgrace.

The same would not be the case for a surgeon who messed up an operation or a structural engineer whose bridge they had designed collapsed. Economists hide their false assumptions and dodgy doctrines behind mathematical equations, but, the truth is, although some failed mathematicians have become economists no economist has yet become a mathematician.

The Labour Party believes that the car should be overhauled with a mixture of state regulation and selective nationalisation, both of which are opposed by the Socialist Party of Great Britain as having nothing to do with socialism. Mrs. May wants the car streamlined and its new parts procured solely from the private sector so it can be made faster and can outpace all the foreign competitors.

The Liberal Democrats can’t make up their minds which of these two methods they favour - perhaps neither of them. What they would like is for the two passengers sitting in the back to stop fighting each other. This reflects the belief-held by the Liberal Democrats’ belief in the need for a “*fair*” capitalism. In this they are joined by the Labour Party and the Tories, although “*fairness*” is a politically contested word: in a highly competitive society of “*dog-eat-dog*” nothing is fair. Look at Sir Philip Green. He wins billions and stashes his ill-gotten gains abroad in a safe tax haven while BHS workers lose their jobs and pensions. That’s capitalism.

You cannot, for example, have socialist distribution taking place on the basis of the minority class ownership of the means of production. You cannot have fairness when the playing field is tilted in favour of the capitalist class. And you cannot have “*fairness*” when the class power of the 1% rides rough-shod over the class powerlessness of the remaining 99%. The dilapidated car with its filthy windscreen and litany of mechanical faults is all the politicians can offer the working class. It fails the MOT. The scrapyard of history is the future for this un-roadworthy car.

By getting the working class to support them at elections; to deny a socialist alternative, capitalism’s politicians have perpetuated a failed social system that during the one hundred years of the twentieth century has led to the deaths of approximately 231 million people in wars and conflicts (*Death in Wars and Conflict*, Milton Leitenberg, Cornell 2006).

This is something capitalist politicians should be reminded of when they are crowing at the current failure of socialists to persuade a majority of workers to make history and establish a moneyless, wageless and classless social system without political leaders. And by no stretch of the imagination can the “*success*” of capitalist political parties in preventing the establishment of socialism be called “*civilized*”, “*decent*” or an act of “*progress*”.

Socialists would just emphasise that from the socialist point of view, the only thing workers should do is establish socialism. That is, for workers to establish a society which will reach its own democratic decisions without leaders and the led, without being burdened by a parasitical capitalist class, a society in which there would be no production

for profit, conflict and war.

THE REFERENDUM AND RACISM

The referendum brought out a bitterly divisive politics, from nationalism to the gutter politics of xenophobia and racism. The press and broadcasters never found time to allow for those of the “*plague on both your houses*” school of thinking. But that is where socialists stand. Whichever way the vote went, it would not bring socialism any nearer. Whether in the EU or not, the wages system of production for profit would continue. As long as this system continues, workers of all nationalities are an exploited class.

The EU cannot solve working class problems like housing; the insecurity of so many workers forced into ‘*zero-hours*’ contracts; the underfunded NHS; the cuts in ‘*welfare*’ benefits: these problems and many more would remain, whether Britain is in the EU or outside it.

The referendum propaganda has thoroughly divided the British workers, rousing and legitimising nationalism, racism and xenophobia. Within days of the vote, there were many recorded incidents around the country of hate crimes, abuse and worse.

But disunity plays into the hands of the capitalist class. In unity there is strength but divisions only weaken us. Whilst the EU is no answer to workers’ problems, the Leave campaign exploited resentment, scapegoating ‘*foreigners*’, immigrants and refugees. The real cause of working class problems is the capitalist system: we need to unite as a class to create a peaceful, cooperative, socialist world..

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Why you should never Vote for the Labour Party

The Socialist Party of Great Britain is often asked how the SPGB reconciles its claim to be a Marxist Party with certain attitudes and statements of Marx and Engels particularly on the question of the working class and the socialist revolution.

Many of these criticisms are based on misunderstandings. The critics have not noticed that, as Marx and Engels gained in knowledge and experience, they themselves rejected or modified views they had held at the beginning of their long years of political activity.

One example of this is the statement made by Engels in 1895 in his introduction to Marx’s THE CLASS STRUGGLES IN FRANCE 1848-50. He wrote:

The rebellion of the old style, the street fight behind barricades, which up to 1848 gave the final decision, has become antiquated

And

The time is past for revolutions carried through by small minorities at the head of the unconscious masses. When it gets to be a matter of the complete transformation of the social organisation, the masses themselves must participate, must understand what is at stake and why they are to act. That much the history of the last fifty years has taught us. But so that the masses may understand what is to be done, long and persistent work is required, and it is this work that we are now performing with results that drive our enemies to despair.

But Engels, as is shown by his unjustifiably optimistic concluding statement, was far from having realised just how “*long and persistent*” that work had to be, and how it had to be conducted. Engels based his optimistic view on the growing membership of the European Social Democratic parties, particularly the German party. Most of those parties claimed to be Marxist and all claimed to have Socialism as their objective, but they also all had in their

programme a long list of immediate demands.

The German Party's list of immediate demands ran into dozens of clauses, including such items as legal recognition of trade unions, training in universal military duty, religion to be declared a private matter and free burials. An examination of this programme reveals the disappearance of all pretence to revolutionary socialist action and an understanding why social democracy failed. As the Socialist Party of Great Britain explained over fifty years later:

Thus the programme, which became a model to be copied by other parties, though excellent in early parts, contained the fatal flaw that was destroying the working class movement for socialism. Reforms had always blunted the theoretical weapon, and continued to do so until genuinely socialist conceptions became submerged in a welter of reform; instead of being just steps on the way to the achievement of socialism, as some of the theorists in the Social Democratic Party thought, the achievement of reforms became ends in themselves, transforming and drowning the end until socialism became identified with state capitalism. Hence the progress that the Social democratic parties made, instead of bringing the achievement of socialism near, simply organised capitalism more effectively in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole (The Communist Manifesto and the Last One Hundred Years, Socialist Party of Great Britain, p. 27).

Socialists take literally the view of Engels that “*the masses themselves must participate, must understand what is at stake and why they must act*”. It is of course an enormous task to win over the working class to an understanding of socialism. However, offering workers a stepping stone of palliatives just does not lead to socialism but to a reformist politics in its own right.

The crisis of social democracy in the 21st century is because the social democratic parties became indistinguishable from the openly capitalist political parties. The error lay in offering workers a list of reforms and not persuading them to become socialists. Today, social democracy, if it means anything, is the uncritical support for the dogma of free trade, free markets and global capitalism lasting forever and forever.

While there was a Social Democratic Federation in Great Britain proclaiming itself Marxist the course of development in this country was different from that of Germany and other continental countries.

The SDF, formed in 1881, gained only a few votes at elections. This was duly noted by Keir Hardie. He believed that the SDF's failure was the “*narrowness*” of its appeal to the workers and argued that the road to socialism had to be broadened by widening the appeal, especially to trade unions, so that a mass party could be built up and the membership then won over to socialism.

It was on this basis that Hardie founded the Independent Labour Party in 1893. He had already been elected to Parliament as an “*independent socialist*” on such a broad programme. He and the ILP were active in the formation of the Labour Party in 1906 and he was its first chairman. Hardie insisted that the Labour Party was a Marxist party, and, in effect, the Labour Party became the British equivalent of the German Social Democratic Party, the supposed “*socialist victories*” of which had misled Engels.

It is therefore against the policies and development of the Labour Party that the line taken by the SPGB can be assessed. In 1907, while Hardie was Chairman of the Labour Party, he published two works: *From Serfdom to Socialism* and *My Confessions of Faith in the Labour Alliance*. In the first he argued:

State Socialism, with all its drawbacks, and these I frankly admit, will prepare the way for free communism in which...the rule of life will be – “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs

By “*State Socialism*” of course he meant nationalisation or “*State Capitalism*”.

In his *Confessions of Faith* Hardie made several statements about Marx and Marxism. One remark he made was that:

The Labour party is the only expression of orthodox Marxian Socialism in Great Britain

Hardie knew all about the SPGB but he chose to ignore the party for his own partisan political reasons.

In the appendix to Chapter 1 (p. 109-112) he gave some definitions of Socialism and Communism. He gave definitions from the British and US Fabian societies, from the Social Democratic Federation, from the Joint Manifesto of the British Socialist Bodies and from the Independent Labour Party. However, he did not give a definition of socialism from the OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES of The Socialist Party of Great Britain.

Hardie went on to say:

The Labour Party practices the Marxian policy of the class struggle, and is blamed by its critics for doing so

And

The founders of the ILP, and even more so, of the Labour Party were, if I may use the expression, in the direct line of apostolic succession from Marx and the other great master minds of Socialist theory and policy

Hardie made much of the argument that the Labour Party was a party of workers, “*Working out their own emancipation*”, and delivered a telling blow against H. M. Hyndman, a leading member of the SDF: “*It is a favourite saying of Mr H. M. Hyndman that no slave class ever emancipated itself*”.

He also boasted of the unprecedented success of the Labour Party in already having thirty members in Parliament. This “success” was to continue to 1945, with 393 MPs. At the 1945 election the Labour Party had a clear majority and still claimed their objective was Socialism (by which they meant State capitalism) though by then; the claim to be “*Marxist*” had disappeared.

The Labour Party had gone the way of The German Social Democratic Party and become a reformist organisation as well as supporting British capitalism in two World Wars. It had simply become an alternative to the Tories in running the profit system, attacking workers and supporting the interest of the employers.

Keir Hardie’s belief that a socialist minority would win-over the non-socialist trade union members to socialism has sunk without trace in the Labour Party, dependent on trade union money and dominated by financial support from the affiliated trade unions all of whom have no interest in seeing capitalism being replaced by socialism. Keir Hardie, in his *Confession of Faith* had already seen one aspect of the development, the infiltration of:

...men who act as though their principle reason for being in the ILP is that they may get returned to Parliament

With the collapse of the Liberal Party after World War I there was a flood of ex-Liberal MPs and members into the Labour Party, who did not pretend to have any interest in socialism. They were to the fore in winning over the Labour Party and trade unions to the view that Marx was out of date and that the way ahead was the improvement of capitalism on the lines of the doctrines of J. M. Keynes.

Today this trend has continued within the Labour Party where the Parliamentary Labour Party thinks it can do what it likes because there is no democratic accountability between Labour MPs and the membership. The membership has no control on how the MPs vote, who they associate with and what they do. There is a political damp proof course between the two sections of the Party just as there is between the Leader and his advisors and the Labour MPs who are told when and how to vote by an arcane “*whipping system*”.

And look at who the Labour members get to “*represent*” them. An MP like Tristram Hunt (who supported air-strikes against Assad’s Syria) can cross a picket line at University London’s Queen Mary, ironically to give a lecture on Marx, Engels and Revolution, without troubling his political conscience.

And a chorus of liberals within the Labour Party, like the Keynesian Will Hutton, Principal of Hertford College, Oxford, claim that there are no class interests in capitalism, certainly not unique and distinct interests associated with the working class. This dominant liberal tradition within the Labour Party has never been interested in “*socialism*” but instead, as Hutton himself recently remarked, the establishment of a “*a better capitalism*” within the European

Union (Will Hutton, There's still time for a progressive party to beat Tories in 2020, 3rd July 2016).

What is “progressive” about the Labour Party? After Keynes and the nationalisation programmes demonstrably failed in the 1970s to deliver a Labour Party led “*popular capitalism*”, Tony Blair was elected in 1997 as the saviour of the Party. Things could only get better we were told. They didn’t. Blair embraced the free market and, free trade ethos of the Tories, continued with the anti-trade union legislation of the Thatcher government and told the working class that there was no alternative to the market. Now, over a century later, Labour’s reformism represents a politics of failure and they are a split and ineffectual political organisation.

A failure, that is, except for former Labour MPs and government Ministers who now pursue lucrative careers after leaving office. Here is a selection:

- * Tony Blair, prime minister 1997 – 2007 has a fortune estimated anything between £40 and £60 million.
- * Jack Straw , member of Blair and Brown’s cabinets 1997 – 2010, is a consultant to ED&F Holdings Ltd, a British company based in London specialising in the production and trading of commodities.
- * Alan Milburn, health secretary 1998- 2003 is director of Coviden which describes itself as a “\$10bn global healthcare products leader”.
- * Charles Clarke, education secretary 2002, home secretary 2004 – 2006 was appointed in 2006 as a non-executive director of the LJ Group
- * Patricia Hewitt, health secretary 2005 – 2007 is currently senior adviser to Cinven an educational business.
- * Stephen Byers, trade and industry secretary 1998 – 2001 is now non-executive chairman of water treatment company ACWA and Ritz Climate Offset Company
- * Frank Field, welfare reform minister 1997-1998 is a director of Medicash and is also a member, along with David Blunket, of Ian Duncan Smiths’ Centre for Social Justice, a Tory Think Tank. The think-tank has been labelled “one of the most influential on the British Conservative Party under the leadership of David Cameron” (Wikipedia)

(For the full list of former Labour Ministers and their entry into business and financial boardrooms see THE EXTREME CENTRE, Chapter 1, The Trough, Tariq Ali, pp. 42 to 53, 2015).

The Last Labour government of Blair and Brown left office with official child poverty worse than when they first came into power, unemployment was higher than when they were first elected, and the country had also experienced wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is no excuse for Labour activists, many of whom left the Labour Party in disgust, to bewail that during the Blair and Brown period of office that the Labour Party was no longer “Socialist”. The Labour Party was, is and can never be a Socialist political Party. It has never existed for that purpose. As the late Lord Houghton, one-time chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party once remarked of a previous Labour administration: “*Never has any previous government done so much in so short a time to make modern capitalism work*” (Socialist Party of Great Britain, QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, 1976 p. 52).

The Labour Party also fell in love with the City whose economists told them: “*no more boom and bust*”. There was to be a perpetual boom where the wealth at the table of the rich would trickle down into the hands of the poor below. And the City could do no wrong even contributing to Labour government policy and advising the Treasury. Oh how they all cheered Gordon Brown on the steps of Lehman brothers in 2004 when he said:

I would like to pay tribute to the contribution you and your company made to the prosperity of Britain. During its 150 year history, Lehman Brothers has always been an innovator, financing new ideas and inventions before many others even began to realize their potential (DAILY TELEGRAPH 16.09.08)

Now the Labour Party has a leader in Jeremy Corbyn, someone who wants to return to Keynes and to wrap himself up in the comfort blanket of the 1945 Labour Government. He conveniently forgets that it was a period of austerity

where the Labour government continually used troops to break strikes, reneged on a free NHS "*at the point of delivery*" so that British capitalism could take part in the Korean War and commissioned the atomic bomb in secret. And by 1973, with an economic crisis and rising unemployment, Keynesianism was finished.

A principled and democratic socialist party would not behave in the way the Labour Party has historically done. The membership as a whole will instruct delegates when in Parliament and will be actively involved in the socialist revolution. The membership will make the decisions without the need for leaders. Nor will a socialist party be a springboard for academic and political careers leading to well-paid sinecures and snouts buried deep in well-filled troughs.

It has been left to the Socialist Party of Great Britain to keep alive the socialist ideas of Marx and Engels, vindicating the position taken up at the formation of the SPGB in 1904 that the establishment of socialism has to be the conscious, political and democratic work of a socialist majority through a principled socialist party with only socialism at its aim.

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Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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